countries would be known only after finalisation of the tender. The reason and rationale behind importing the wheat *inter alia*, are reduced availability of wheat stocks in the central Pool, high ruling market prices, higher off take, lower procurement levels and to augment the domestic availability of wheat.

(b) and (c) The stocks of wheat in the Central pool as on 1.1.2006 was 61.88 lakh MTs as against the buffer norm of 82 lakh MTs. These stocks are sufficient to meet the requirement under PDS and welfare schemes until the next procurement season commencing in the 3rd week of March, 2006. Since the Government is firmly committed not to compromise in the matter of food security and also to keep a check on the open market prices of wheat, it has been decided to augment the domestic availability of wheat by import of 5 lakh MTs of wheat.

Import of Wheat

615. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to import wheat this year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the quantity to be imported, indicating the rates of import and the names of the countries from where wheat is to be imported;

(d) the present stocks of wheat in Government godowns; and

(e) the estimated domestic consumption of wheat during 2006-07?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Government has allowed State Trading Corporation to import 5 lakh MTs of wheat at the Southern ports only. The above decision was taken keeping in view the reduced wheat stocks in the central Pool, the need to keep a check on the open market prices of wheat as well as to augment the domestic availability of wheat as the Government is not to compromise in the matter of food security. The rates of import and the names of the countries would be known after finalization of the tender fliated for purchase of wheat by the State Trading Corporation.

(d) The wheat stocks in the Central Pool as on 1.2.2006 was 48.74 lakh MTs.

(e) The estimated domestic consumption of wheat during 2006-07 from the Central Pool is likely to be 175 lakh MTs.

Protest by Saints for Pollution in Ganga

†616. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the protest registered by saints regarding polluted Ganga water in Allahabad;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that Ganga water in Allahabad and its adjacent areas is getting polluted;

(c) if so, the details in this regard;

(d) whether Government have taken immediate steps to save Ganga water from pollution; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The protest of the saints vovered by media has come to the notice of the Government. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) are carrying out special water quality monitoring of river Ganga at Allahabad during Magh Mela period (January 14 - February 26, 2006). The data revealed Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) during Magh Mela period as 5 milligram per litre as against 3.1 milligram per litre observed as lean season average during regular monitoring in 2005. The applicable BOD standard is 3.0 milligram per litre. The colour was observed in river Ganga downstream of the confluence of tributaries namely, Ramganga and Kali, which persisted slightly up to Allahabad. During the Magh Mela period nearly 1.8 crore people have taken bath at the Sangam at Allahabad till date.

(d) and (e) The Government is implementing Ganga Action Plan for abatement of pollution in the river through various schemes namely,

† Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.